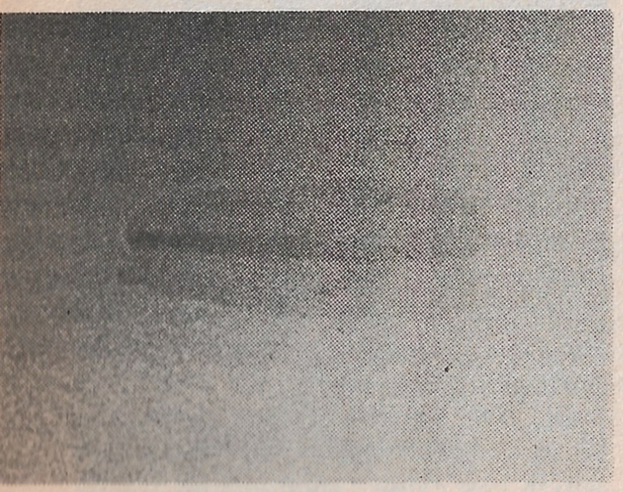
LIVING UFOs

What if UFOs are not extraterrestrial machines but strange atmospheric life-forms? Startling photographic evidence adds a new element to the UFO mystery.

By Richard Toronto

IN JULY 1978, after 22 years of fruitless effort, Trevor James Constable informed me that he was giving up UFO research. "I've given them [the public] an overdose," he said, "so it'll take another 20 years to go down. And by that time I won't be here and somebody else will have carried it on. You have to be coldly factual about these things."



"Flying hamburger" appeared on one frame of film taken over desert mountains in California on May 4, 1977.

The "overdose" was the three books he has published on the subject: *They Live in the Sky, The Cosmic Pulse of Life* and *Sky Creatures.* Each argues that at least some UFOs are biological in nature. Some people call them "space animals"; Constable calls them "critters." As proof of their existence he offers photographs which depict these creatures "swimming" through the atmosphere.*

Talking with Constable, I was surprised to hear that few people have attempted to duplicate his experiments. In fact, hardly anybody has been willing to consider the idea of biological UFOs. Constable is careful to point out that he was not the first to do so. That honor, he says, goes to John Philip Bessor, whom Constable describes as the "granddaddy of the critter theory." (Bessor, on the other hand, emphatically insists, "I am *not* the granddaddy of the idea, simply the originator!")

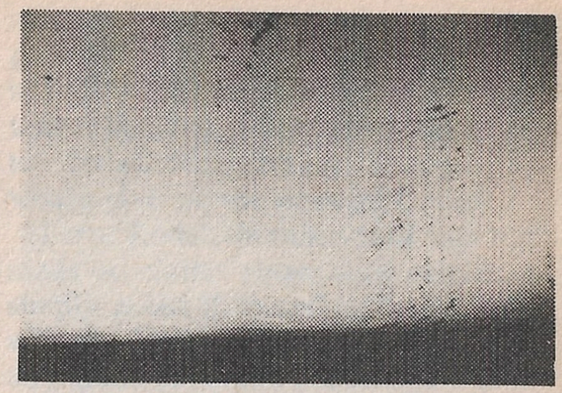
*See John White's "The Critters Who Live in Space," August 1976 FATE.

One day in the late 1940's Bessor noticed that many UFOs exhibit characteristics of so-called paranormal phenomena. "The 'skipping' motion is comparable to the poltergeist-propelled objects of a haunted house," he said. Such things "often waver or skip in transit. Then, too, ghosts are always '10 feet ahead' of a pursuer. . . .Their sudden disappearance 'in midair' is comparable to a ghost's dematerialization."

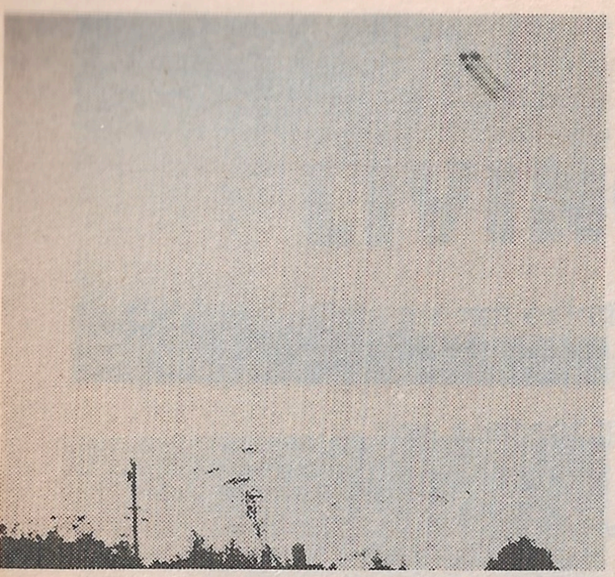
From this observation Bessor developed the concept of the "ideoplasm," a type of primitive, ectoplasmic creature "originating in the stratosphere-ionosphere, capable of materialization and dematerialization." These creatures, according to Bessor's theory, rank alongside oysters or fish in intelligence. His official entry into the bio-UFO field came in the form of a letter to the Air Materiel Command at Wright Air Force Base in July 1947. In it he outlined his space animal theory of UFOs* and spiced his conjecture with incidents of "gelatinous meteors" from years past.

These gelatinous meteors have troubled astronomers for a long time. As early as 1819 Rufus Graves, a lecturer in chemistry at Dartmouth College, described an odd material he found after a meteor shower: a "buff-colored, pulpy substance of the consistence of good, soft soap, of an offensive suffocating smell. A few minutes' exposure to the atmosphere changed the buff into a livid color resembling venous blood. It was observed to attract moisture readily from the air."

*Bessor has written two articles for FATE on this subject. "Are the Saucers Space Animals?" (December 1955) and "UFOs: Animal or Mineral?" (November 1967).



In this three-frame sequence shot in Vallejo, Calif., on November 16, 1977, camera was moved progressively to right with each successive shot. The "heads" and "tails" appear to be product of movement in the objects. Second frame reveals a part of the first, larger "school" of phenomena. Last frame shows a small group to right of main group. Kodak laboratory said these images were probably "finger marks."



These "ideoplasms" from November 16, 1977, film resemble tight formation of UFOs complete with "vapor trails."

Some readers may recall another outbreak of purplish blobs in 1973. They were found climbing telephone poles in suburban Dallas, Tex.

Whatever they are, such phenomena have been around for centuries. Bessor says that the earliest account he has been able to locate is from 1650, at which time they were called "nostocs."

* * *

IN MAY 1977 I was on my way to the Mojave Desert to interview the famous flying saucer contactee George Van Tassel. The year before, I had read Constable's *Cosmic Pulse* whose chapters on the critters fascinated me. So I armed myself with four rolls of high-speed infrared film and determined to photograph them. Constable had concluded that the rare, unpolluted atmosphere of the high desert region was best-suited for the taking of critter pictures. I was now in the Yucca Valley/Giant Rock area where Constable had worked in the late 1950's.

At twilight I stationed myself on a quiet road just outside Apple Valley, near Victorville, and shot a couple of rolls of film, arcing my camera in a 180-degree sweep across the horizon. Because the sun had already set behind the mountains, I had no fear of lens flare showing up. I labeled the film containers and put them away. Next night I repeated the experiment. I wouldn't be able to develop the film until my return home.

When the films were processed, I glanced over them in a cursory fashion. Nothing, I thought. They hung from the ceiling for a week until a friend came over and took an interest in them.

"What are these?" he asked. I told him. He took it upon himself to examine each frame carefully.

"Look at this!" he exclaimed after scrutinizing one frame with a telephone pole reference point. This time I saw a torpedo-shaped object resembling Constable's critters. I was, needless to say, amazed. Later, after thoroughly going over every frame with a magnifying glass, I found an even stranger image: a "flying hamburger" cruising over the desert mountains. Although they were the only solid frames out of 144, they suggested that Bessor and Constable had been right all along: these things *are* flitting around the atmosphere.

There is nothing mysterious about the workings of Kodak high-speed infrared film. Kodak outlines its handling on each box and Constable details his methods in all his books. I have tried different methods: with and without filters, with and without changing bag. Aside from fogging which occurs at the beginning of the roll of film, the use or nonuse of a changing bag does not seem to have any effect on the appearance or nonappearance of critter images. For the sake of control, however, it is advisable to use the bag, despite its clumsiness in the field.

My first small success pushed me to further experimentation. Just for the record (and for the purpose of saving myself continual trips to the high desert) I decided to attempt this kind of photography in my own area. I walked barely six blocks from my house to a hill behind a local cemetery, a quiet spot. It afforded me an expansive view toward distant mountains, over a large marshy area cut down the middle by the Napa River.

Shooting in a circle, as I did before, still not seeing anything but clear sky, I got more results! Since the cemetery is only about 14 feet above sea level, Constable's idea that best results could be obtained only in high mountain areas was refuted. This was indeed interesting. Then something even more unusual began to happen.

I noticed that I was getting oddball shapes or forms that resembled neither UFOs nor critters. These anomalies within the anomaly resembled funnels. Since infrared film picks up any type of heat source, it appeared that I had found either a new type of critter or another type of phenomenon. Another odd characteristic of the objects was their inconsistent appearances on the film. One frame might contain one or several objects, while the frame before or after had nothing. Sometimes on a good evening almost every frame contained some new revelation. It was time, I decided, to send some negatives to Kodak for scrutiny. Maybe this would give me the answers I needed.

I sent Kodak three strips of film but made no claims about their origins. I simply asked if something was wrong with the film. Over a month later I got an official answer: no. The film was in good condition at the time it was shot, Kodak said. The effects were caused, the company suggested, by nothing more than drying spots and finger marks on the film — or maybe I had hastily unloaded the film from the film canister.

This was a bit hard for me to swallow, since by this time I had been poring over these things for months and was well aware of what drying spots and finger marks look like. As one who had been handling film for over

"Vallejo Anomaly," photographed September 9, 1977, has been explained as "ingress point" and "halo pillar."

nine years, I considered the Kodak suggestions a blow to my photographer's ego. So I snapped another roll and sent it to a laboratory without opening it. More critters. Either everyone out there smudges his fingers all over the film or someone at Kodak didn't interrupt his coffee break long enough to check these things out thoroughly. The plot thickens.

Enter D. Scott Rogo, parapsychologist. Scott dropped by one day to look over the photographs I had been collecting. After a few questions he told me his own theory about them. "Thoughtography," he said. "They are psychic photos in which the photographer tunes images onto the film emulsion himself." Hmmm. This might explain the incongruous images that had been turning up, like the funnels. I was still unconvinced, however, that all these things could be psychic in origin. Many of them exhibited what appeared to be movement. And at Constable's home I had seen actual movie films that showed a fishlike critter, complete with mouth and head, in the sky.

Later I was to find out the Rogo isn't the only man with a theory about the photographs. Donald Cyr, editor of *Stonehenge Viewpoint,* believes the funnel represents a "halo pillar," formed of ice crystals and very rarely seen by modern man. Another researcher from Santa Monica, Calif., thinks it is a "magnetic ingress point" where gravity and light refuse to work right. And a man from Chicago speculated that I had photographed energy emanating from a fault or stress line in the earth. Now this was getting further and further from my original critter work and I wondered where it would take me next.

The answer to that soon became painfully apparent. I got *no* results for months; in fact, 1978 was not a good year for ideoplasms. The critters — at least the more spectacular ones to which I had grown accustomed — seemed to vanish. Constable advised me to stick to my tried-and-true spot behind the cemetery but even that did not help. He also told me not to try so hard at capturing these anomalies, that I should "take it easy." Had I lost my touch? Or were the ideoplasms really linked somehow to a psychic sense that I now had lost?

My fears, as it turned out, were unfounded. I continued to get results but less frequently and less spectacularly than before. The dwindling of my elusive photographic subjects puzzled me.

One piece of paraphernalia Constable recommended but I was unable to acquire was an 18A filter. At first I thought this might help me but have since changed my mind. This coveted filter is hard to come by for some reason. It allows only infrared light waves to hit the film plane. Constable ceased using this device eventually and was filming critter anomalies on Kodak Ektrachrome super-8mm film with no gimmicks. I have on file a panchromatic shot of a small critter, taken unknowingly in Orlando, Fla., while I was vacationing there. And I have seen ideoplasm photographs, which others have taken purely by chance, on black-on-white panchromatic film. Obviously this phenomenon, while far from cooperative, is definitely there.

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Just what determines the frequency with which these anomalies appear on film? And why have they been associated with meteor showers throughout history?

Bessor believes that the ideoplasms may be taking refuge from upper atmosphere disturbances when they are sighted here on earth. His studies of the works of Charles Fort gave him a clue. Writing in M. K. Jessup's *The UFO Annual,* Bessor remarks, "I noted that the 1870's, '80's and 90's saw record and near record-breaking weather and also a tremendous number of flying saucer reports. This leads me to suppose that there is a cyclic recurrence of periods of freak weather and aerial phenomena. I think we can be justified in assuming that the solar or cosmic disturbances in space which affect freak weather also cause the 'flying saucers' to 'migrate' to more dense atmosphere, coming within our range of observation. Since 1946 there have appeared in our papers numerous accounts of migrations of fishes into waters previously foreign to them, and of the intrusion of wolves, bears and other wild animals into areas in which they had never before been observed."

The matter of critter photography, which appeared to be simple at first, turned out to be more complicated than I had imagined. As Constable has taught me, patience is mandatory in this business — patience and persistence. The interested researcher will find the field still wide open. The first positive results are enough to make further investment of time and money worthwhile. You needn't wait for the scientists to give this phenomenon their seal of approval. The gelatinous meteors are there for those with a knack and a roll of infrared film.

A GHOST IN THE FAMILY

ALAN and Kaye LaRue admitted in February 1979 that they have a ghost in their turn-of-the-century house in Frankfort, Mich. They call her Mary. Soon after the LaRues and their daughters Evanne, 16, and Amy, six, moved into the house in June 1978, they discovered they had uninvited company.

Mrs. LaRue told United Press International that Mary turns on lights and television sets, moves furniture, rattles dishes, opens and closes doors and fiddles with the family typewriter.

"I thought something strange was happening two or three days after we moved in," Mrs. LaRue said. "We hung a planter from the ceiling and later found it was moved over about four inches, hook and all. And there was no one around who could have done it.

"Then our dining room table moved four feet so we moved it back. The next day it moved four feet again and we moved it back. The next day it moved four feet again and we moved it back.

"Finally it quit," she said.

She added that everyone in the family has learned to live with the ghost.